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JUKEBOX SATURDAY NIGHT

MORE MEMORIES OF THE RECORDERS AND BEYOND

60
GREAT
PHOTOS

INTERVIEWS AND EXCLUSIVES FEATURING

Artie Shaw
Les Brown
Duke Ellington
Stan Kenton
Red Norvo
Jimmy Dorsey
Tommy Dorsey
Harry James
Glenn Miller
and
Ben Grisiati

Also With:
Carmel Quinn
Les Paul
Beryl Davis
Sally Bennett

The Songwriters:
Ervin Drake
Jack Lawrence
George David Weiss



- How It Was the World of Music -
and the World of the World -
and the World of the World -
and the World of the World -
- The Record and the World

Foreword by **Ann Hulan**

JUKEBOX SATURDAY NIGHT

More Memories of the Big Band Era and Beyond

by
RICHARD GRUDENS

Author of
The Best Damn Trumpet Player,
The Song Stars,
The Music Men,
and *Snootie Little Cutie*

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Artie Shaw and his band, 1953. (Richard Grudens Collection)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Jukebox Saturday Night

More Memories of the Big Band Era and Beyond

FOREWORD

Ann Jillianviii

INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Richard Grudensxi

A NOTE FROM MILT BERNHART

President Big Band Academy of Americaxiv

The Song: - "Jukebox Saturday Night"

by Stillman and McGranexvii

PART ONE

THE EARLY DANCE BANDS OF1

Paul Whiteman, Isham Jones, Fletcher Henderson, Casa Loma, Fred Waring, Leo Reisman, Jean Goldkette, Ben Pollack, Vincent Lopez, Coon-Sanders, Wayne King, Ted Lewis, and Gus Arnheim

THE GREAT BALLROOMS12

The Glen Island Casino, St. Francis Hotel, Meadowbrook, Cafe Rouge, Aragon, Starlite, Valencia, Roseland, Sunnysbrook, Tune Town, Graystone, and more of those wonderful places where you danced to the Big Bands

PART TWO

ARTIE SHAW — The "Begin the Beguine" Band Begins20

LES BROWN — And The Band of Renown34

STAN KENTON — The Sweet Sound of Thundering Music	52
DUKE ELLINGTON — <i>Ellingtonia</i> means Belief in the Music . . .	68
RED NORVO — Father of His Instrument	82
HARRY JAMES Revisited — You Made Me Love You — with Joe Pardee and Lynn Roberts	92
TOMMY and JIMMY DORSEY — Those Fabulous Dorseys with Bob Melvin	101
GLENN MILLER — Perspective with Bandleader Larry O'Brien .	112
BEN GRISAFI — Alumni's Hideaway	119

PART THREE

Three Unsung Songwriters of Tin Pan Alley

Ervin Drake, Jack Lawrence, and George David Weiss	127
--------------------------------------------------------------	-----

SOME SPECIAL PEOPLE

CARMEL QUINN — A Fairytale Story	145
LES PAUL — The Wizard of Waukesha Speaks	152
BERYL DAVIS — "I'll Be Seeing You" Major Glenn Miller's Last Vocalist	159
SALLY BENNETT — <i>Magic Moments</i> with the Big Bands	166

PART FOUR

THE BIG BANDS OF OVER THERE

from Ted Heath and Syd Lawrence to Thilo Wolf and Andy Prior by Max Wirz	171
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

PART FIVE

WLIM RADIO

New York: Anatomy of a Big Band Radio Station.	203
--------------------------------------------------------	-----

Honorable Mentions:

Billy May, Gene Krupa, Frankie Carle, Bill Elliot, Mitch Miller, Sammy Kaye, Kay Kyser and more.	212
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Bibliography	222
------------------------	-----

Index	225
-----------------	-----

Order Form for all four books	235
-----------------------------------------	-----

FOREWORD

by Ann Jillian

In 1984 Richard Grudens first interviewed me while I was performing with Bob Hope at Westbury Music Fair on Long Island. Richard's been a friend and supporter ever since, always fair, always reporting an honest account of my career activities to his readers throughout the years.

This new chronicle Richard has written about some of our musical heroes is the fourth in a series and profiles bandleaders, musicians, arrangers, singers and other participants of what's been identified as *America's Golden Age of Music*, the period beginning with the roaring 1920's, right through the war years and beyond, an unbroken line through the frenetic rock and roll period, with enough of it's greatness continuing today. Performers like me have benefited greatly from these early innovators of music.

In *Jukebox* you will read about the musically productive life and career of the great bandleaders Artie Shaw, Les Brown, and Red Norvo, through personal interviews which are totally readable with interviewing techniques that allow his subjects to be extremely forthcoming.

Remembrances of the early dance bands of Paul Whiteman, Casa Loma, Leo Reisman, Jean Goldkette, Vincent Lopez, Ted Lewis, and Coon-Sanders are featured, as well as stories of the celebrated ballrooms where people like you, and perhaps your parents, danced happily to the music they loved.

The Meadowbrook, the Glen Island Casino, the Graystone, the Sunnybrook, the Coconut Grove, the Palomar, and Tune Town, among others, are profiled here for your fond recollection or first introduction.



(Courtesy of Camille Smith)

Richard talks with some of the surviving, unsung songwriters of the age: Ervin Drake, who wrote "It Was A Very Good Year" and "I Believe;" Jack Lawrence, who wrote "Linda" and "Tenderly;" George David Weiss who wrote "Mr. Wonderful" and "What A Wonderful World;" all great songs that made the bands and their vocalists so popular during that august melodic period.

Last, but not least, he also presents to you the renowned broadcasters, the radio disc jockies who brought the music into your home or car, and yesterday's and today's European bandleading counterparts of yesterday's and today's American Big Bands.

You can always be certain that the facts as presented in this book are completely accurate, for Richard Grudens specializes in what Big Band vocalist Connie Haines calls "the truth as we all lived it" accuracy, always checking with his subjects or their associates or survivors before placing their life's work into public print.

As a veteran actor, singer and entertainer who has been there, working Broadway, Las Vegas, Tahoe, Atlantic City, many places on Bob Hope's USO tours, singing the songs that were popular in this era, and on lots and lots of television, I recommend this chronicle to you as an enjoyable flashback into a time considered by so many as musically unique.

Jukebox Saturday Night is a pleasing trip down memory lane. Sit back, enjoy an hour or two, and re-live those wonderful, musical days of our lives.

Ann Jillian,
Sherman Oaks, California
March 1999



BAND LEADERS IN THE 1950's

Top Row L-R Stan Kenton, Lawrence Welk, Les Brown, Harry James, Ray Anthony, Freddy Martin, Orrin Tucker.

Bottom Row L-R Sam Donahue, Woody Herman, LeRoy Anthony, Jerry Gray.

(Photo files of Audrey Kenton)

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

by Richard Grudens

It's been over thirty years since George T. Simon's original, definitive book *The Big Bands* with a foreword by Frank Sinatra was first published, and fifteen years since Leo Walker's fifth printing of the original *Big Band Almanac* was first compiled in 1978.

After publication of my first book, *The Best Damn Trumpet Player*, featuring interview pieces with Lionel Hampton, Harry James, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Ray Anthony, Woody Herman, and Buddy Rich sprinkled among some singers and personalities of the Big Band Era, I authored two additional books on the singers, *The Song Stars*, about the lady singers, and *The Music Men*, about the men singers, along with myriad other material to complete, I thought, a trilogy.

Upon reviewing the three books, Dr. Stanley Cohen, President of Five Towns Music College in Dix Hills, New York suggested an additional volume be added to the trilogy that would focus on the remaining Big Bands not portrayed in the first three to complete what he felt was begun — a complete, cohesive presentation of data told through surviving participants of music's Golden Age while these icons are still with us.

"We have added all three of your books to our library and to our bibliography of Graduate Course offerings. The additional book will round out the texts," he said. His concept is to utilize the four books as texts which would be the basis of a graduate course covering exponents of swing music of the Big Band Era for future students to consider and comprehend.

With the new book in mind, I telephoned George T. Simon at his New York City home and talked with him about compiling information for a new Big Band book. "Of course! It's a great idea. A refresher and updating is needed, and, if you need any help, call me," he said.

All four books acknowledge the bands, large and small, famous and obscure, old and new. In compiling interviews, information, and quotations, I have long ago decided that all the facts must be accurate. No fudging. No poetic license. No guessing. Acting as the old radio news writer I once was, I realized that truth and accuracy were paramount. As Connie Haines said, responding to my comments request on *The Music Men*, "You always tell the truth about the Big Band Era, as I lived it." Maria Ellington Cole and Kathryn Crosby expressed similar comments.

The title *Jukebox Saturday Night* suggests the age of the Big Band Era and earlier, when roadside houses, which featured playing recordings on commercial machines, were known as *Juke joints*, or *Jook joints*, suggesting a synonym for sex, dance, and music. The word *juke* is much like its sister phrases *rock 'n roll* or *funk*, a combination of words that black society of the time spawned in shanty bars and café's located in poor, agricultural areas of Southern America.

According to J. Krivine's 1977 book about the jukebox, also entitled *Jukebox Saturday Night*: "Saturday night was for good times. Juke bands or gin mill piano players would perform. When electrically amplified recording machines were introduced, they became known as *juke boxes*. Rather than hiring a band, these places utilized first the phonograph, then the *juke box* arrived."

Jukebox Saturday Night will profile some great bands and some not so great. Among them Artie Shaw's and Les Brown's bands, two of the best. Red Norvo's story is less known but as valid as any. We lost Red Norvo in early April, just before the book's first printing.

As with each book, I received lots of assistance. First, my special thanks goes to my friend and mentor Frankie Laine. Frank is eighty-six and still recording. We have been friends for almost twenty years. Frank and his exemplary management of life and career has always been an inspiration to me. Secondly, I thank Connie Haines, whose biography we are authoring together, for her immeasurable help and infectious enthusiasm.

I sincerely thank Ruth Ellington and her sons Stephen and Michael for insight about the great Duke Ellington; Joe Pardee and lovely Lynn Roberts for their assistance with Harry James; Big Band writer Bob Melvin for his comments on the Dorseys; my friend, bandleader Larry O'Brien and his amazing group of youngsters who keep Glenn Miller's precious music active worldwide; the spirited and gracious Audree

Kenton for help with her Stanley, whose legacy she protects and promotes; Doris Day and Stumpy Brown for help with Les Brown; and Portia Norvo, for help with her dad, Red Norvo.

Thanks, too, to Anthony DiFlorio III for all-around encouragement and direction; Anthony Agostinelli of "The Network," vocalist Anita O'Day and Milt Bernhart for help with Stan Kenton; Andy Murcia for help with his wife, Ann Jillian; Don Kennedy of "Big Band Jump," who keeps our kind of music going strong; my dedicated editor, Mary Lou Facciola; Tess, *marvelous* Tess Russell, who finds those unfindable subjects with charm and grace, even when she is lying in her sickbed from where she frequently telephoned me; author George T. Simon, who started it all with his prolific contributions in *Metronome* Magazine; Frank Esposito of *Remember When* magazine for his ideas and research; the champion of the Big Bands, Roy Belcher of Big Bands International in England; Frank Touhey of Montpelier in Cheltenham, England, and bandleader Ray Anthony of Los Angeles, who distribute all those wonderful Big Band recordings. And a special remembrance of William B. Williams, along with thanks to Jack Ellsworth, whom I consider to be the two best broadcasters of *our kind of music* ever.

I thank my immediate family, my wife, Jean, and son Bob, for their patience because I wind up ignoring their need for my presence. They have grown used to me sitting in front of my Mac Classic with the little black and white screen and serving me tea and apple pie at an appointed hour. They know where my heart lies while each book is composed. Writers somehow have to find a way to make it up to their families.

So, turn and absorb the pages written about the dance bands, ballrooms, Big Bands, songwriters, vocalists, arrangers, broadcasters, and European counterparts, all contributing to the legacy of the Big Bands.

Doris Day once told me that she plays music when she reads, trying to capture the mood of the book. Good idea! Play Glenn Miller recordings as you absorb each word of the Glenn Miller chapter. Perhaps play "Begin the Beguine" with Artie Shaw or "Artistry in Rhythm" when reading about Stan Kenton. It sets the mood and colors each chapter melodically. That's exactly what I do while I write about each of them.

Richard Grudens — Stony Brook, New York
April 25, 1999

A note from MILT BERNHART

PRESIDENT of the BIG BAND ACADEMY OF AMERICA



Milt Bernhart, Redondo Beach, CA, 1999 (Courtesy of Milt Bernhart)

I've felt for as long as I can remember that records have an important role to play in the scheme of things — pleasure, education, promotion...all of that and more.

But they can't come close to the real live thing. If you are too young to have heard Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra then...you never will. But you say you've heard recent re-releases, and what do I mean, it's not the same?

That's just what I mean...**it's not the same!** The playing on the record may be fabulous, but the player was playing to a microphone, not an audience in most cases. And that makes a big difference (in my humble opinion). The microphone hears all, but couldn't care less. It's more

than a rumor that the best music ever — was not recorded. Is that bad? No! It's wonderful. You had to be there. Am I reaching you?

And if you were there, you may have even tried to describe what you heard to someone who wasn't there. Didn't work, did it?

You just had to be there!

Like life itself, you go with the bumps. It's worth it.

And besides...for all of us, both performers and listeners, there's more good music just up ahead. Don't you hear the orchestra warming up, and the excited buzz of the audience as they find their seats? Anticipation is in the air. Music is about to claim us.

Thank you, God.



Hollywood Palladium premiere opening. Halloween Eve, 1940. "You had to be there!" (Richard Grudens Collection)

Quite A Party!



(L-R) Buddy Rich, Woody Herman, Willard Alexander, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Stan Kenton, and Mel Tormé at a party for Willard Alexander, 1955. (Courtesy Andree Kenton)

The Song JUKEBOX SATURDAY NIGHT

by Stillman & McGrane

*Moppin' Up Soda Pop Rickeys
To Our Heart's Delight,
Dancing to Swing a Real Quickie
Jukebox Saturday Night*

*Goodman and Kyser and Miller
Help to make things right,
Make a Hot Lick with Vanilla
Jukebox Saturday Night*

*They Put Nuthin' Past Us
Me and Honeylamb,
Making one Coke Last Us
'Til It's Time To Scram
Money, We Really Don't Need That,
We'll Make Out All Right,
Letting The Other Guy Feed That,
Jukebox Saturday Night*

*After sippin' a soda
We Got a Scheme
Somebody Else Plays the Record Machine
It's So Easy to Use Pet Names
When You Listen to the Trumpet of Harry James
(trumpet solo)*

*We Love to Hear the Tenor Croon
Whenever the Inkspots Sing a Tune
(vocal group sings)
Money! We Really Don't Need That
We'll Make Out Alright,
Lettin' That Other Guy Feed That*

JUKEBOX SATURDAY NIGHT .



Band Leader, Paul Whiteman, 1929 (Richard Grudens Collection)

PART ONE

THE EARLY DANCE BANDS

GET READY, GET SET, LET'S DANCE!

Proliferating throughout the Big Band Era, the musical organizations of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, and Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey attracted colossal crowds at America's dance pavilions, theaters and hotels. Earlier, those very same venues hosted dozens of pioneer dance bands. The unique musical congregations of Paul Whiteman, Fred Waring, Vincent Lopez, Wayne King, Casa Loma, Fletcher Henderson, Coon-Sanders, Ted Lewis, Jean Goldkette, Leo Reisman, Gus Arnheim, and Isham Jones set the stage for the dynamics that was to come.

In the grand ballrooms of New York's Waldorf-Astoria, Biltmore, Savoy, and Roosevelt hotels and at rural small-town locations like the Sunnybrook Ballroom in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, enthusiastic dancing partners could swing to all the great dance bands in the early decades of this century.

Paul Whiteman's King of Jazz Orchestra

Paul Whiteman's 1920 landmark recordings of "Whispering" and "The Japanese Sandman" spurred national interest in jazz dance music in the days when radio was still a novelty, television far off into the future, and sound films still ten years away. Showcased at San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel (long before Tony Bennett left his heart there) and Los Angeles' Alexandria Hotel, both songs enjoyed unexpected, spectacular success. With their catchy, infectious phrasing, you'll find yourself whistling and humming those tunes over and over all day long.

A recording contract followed as well as a long run at the Palais Royale in New York City. Paul Whiteman and his mis-named King of Jazz Orchestra was on top of the beat that people were dancing to in what is considered the beginning of the Jazz Age, even though Whiteman was hardly considered a jazzman. His world-famous orches-

tra employed some of the later greats of pop and jazz music including Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey; arranger and composer Ferde Grofé; arranger Bill Challis; vocalist Bing Crosby; legendary cornetists Bix Beiderbecke and Henry Busse; guitarist Eddie Lang; vocalist Mildred Bailey; violinist Joe Venuti; cornetist Loring "Red" Nichols; saxist Frankie Trumbauer; composer, pianist Hoagy Carmichael; pianist, leader and arranger Lennie Hayton; saxist, bandleader Roy Barge; trumpeter, bandleader Bunny Berigan; trombonist and leader Jack Teagarden; trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, trumpeter Billy Butterfield, and many others, a virtual *who's who* of American popular music. Even the great entertainer Al Jolson was once backed by Whiteman on the original "Kraft Music Hall" radio show.

I personally enjoyed the almost daily acquaintance of Paul Whiteman at his NBC studio office in the early fifties. An NBC studio page, I observed him frequently while directing visitors to his office, always receiving a personal thank-you and sometimes a fatherly arm about the shoulder. At the time I did not fully realize his significant contribution to the music of the Jazz Age. Remember, it was Paul Whiteman who premiered George Gershwin's classic composition "Rhapsody in Blue" to the world at an Aeolian Hall concert, New York City's then sanctuary of classical music, on February 12, 1924, with the composer himself at the piano. Paul Whiteman's King of Jazz Orchestra with thirty-four all-stars was the biggest name and the most creative force in the music business during that period.

The Casa Loma Orchestra

The Casa-Loma Orchestra, originally named The Orange Blossom Band, began playing dance music at the Glen Island Casino in New Rochelle, New York, and the Colonnades in Manhattan's Essex House. The Casa Loma name originated when the Casa Loma Hotel in Toronto, Canada, went bankrupt and the band's manager, Jean Goldkette, sent the now-unemployed Orange Blossom Band on tour, re-naming it the Casa Loma Orchestra. Orchestra members, always outfitted in bow ties and tails, were also its board of directors, each man receiving an equal share in the profits, making it a cooperative band. It became the nation's favorite dance orchestra - not a hot band - but sweet and popular. On

one 1939 Decca album alone, the group recorded composer Hoagy Carmichael's "Rockin' Chair," "Georgia On My Mind," "Riverboat Shuffle," "Little Old Lady," "Lazy River," and, of course, the ultimate standard "Stardust."

With a playing style that was considered new and different, alto-sax player Glen Gray, who eventually became the band's leader, led the Casa Loma Orchestra to great commercial success. My longtime friend Bill Challis arranged some of the organization's lasting charts, as he did earlier for the Goldkette band and later for the Whiteman band. "Smoke Rings," written by H.Eugene Gifford and Ned Washington, was the Casa Loma theme. This now very classy orchestra continued running strong, especially when they succeeded Ray Noble's Orchestra at the celebrated Rainbow Room up on Radio City's 65th floor, lasting until the Second World War began, when it disbanded. Some say Casa Loma initiated the swing craze by the prolific use of *riffs* (repeated phrases by



Casa Loma Orchestra at NBC Studios, 1937 (Richard Grudens Collection)

alternate sections of the band) and an energetic approach to the unmistakable intonation of their brass and reed sections.

I recall Buddy Rich telling me that he enjoyed listening to the recordings of Casa Loma when he was at home between engagements and in the mood for "some very good music." The photo here of Casa Loma is the front -face of a promotional postcard I found recently in an outdoor memorabilia show at Cold Spring Harbor Park on Long Island.

Jean Goldkette's Prolific Orchestra

Jean Goldkette, a former French concert pianist, led a star-filled concert-style musical group rather than a dance band, and he also managed other bands. Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, Joe Venuti, and Bing Crosby's favorite guitarist Eddie Lang, Bix Beiderbecke and arranger Bill Challis were all Goldkette employees. When Goldkette, who also owned the Graystone Ballroom in Detroit, discontinued his short-lived band, after a stunning farewell engagement in New York's Roseland, a number of his players migrated to Paul Whiteman's King of Jazz Orchestra.

Leo Reisman's Society Orchestra

In the early twenties Leo Reisman's Orchestra played strictly sweet dance music. A true society dance band, its muted brass, silky saxes, and singing violins achieved notable success. At the age of ten Reisman was handed a violin by his dad and a year later he became the leader of his grammar school band. At twelve, young Leo began plugging songs in W.T. Grant Department Stores for Houghton & Dutton Music Publishers.

After studying at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, he led a big band in the Egyptian Room of the Brunswick Hotel. Reisman, a busy entrepreneur, maintained and managed over 20 bands at one time, all by different names, thereby becoming a music impresario, being hailed by many as a genius of the music world.

Reisman tried to bring to Boston all he had heard in New York, especially the success of Whiteman with Gershwin's music. Leo Reisman's bright group of musicians performed for thirteen straight



Leo Reisman, about 1929 (Richard Grudens Collection)

years in the Waldorf's prestigious Wedgewood Room (later re-named the Empire Room), employing the first female big band singers Mildred Bailey and Lee Wiley. Reisman's long list of vocalists on recordings included: a young Bing Crosby crooning "Brother Can You Spare a Dime;" Fred and Adele Astaire vocalizing Broadway's *The Band Wagon* on RCA's first long-playing recording score in 1931—just before Astaire's Hollywood career began; Astaire's definitive recording of Cole Porter's "Night and Day" from the movie *The Gay Divorcee* in 1932, and Harold Arlen's - yes, Harold Arlen's vocal on a 1933 recording of his own composition "Stormy Weather," which he composed with lyricist Ted Koehler.

Reisman's career spanned 44 years, over twenty in the recording studio alone. He was directly responsible for the careers of both Benny Goodman and Dinah Shore, among others, and was the very first to feature a black artist in his orchestra. At first resisting jazz, for him an unacceptable innovation of music, he later accepted the idea, adapting it to his personal style.

Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians

Charming and handsome Fred Waring, whom most know as a leader of Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians singing group, started his first band in

1916 with his brother Tom as vocalist. After first trying to make it as a dance band at the Colonial Theater in Richmond, Virginia in the early twenties, he later developed his singing musical-show organization instead. First, he developed a quartet of banjo players; then, further developing in radio on Detroit's WWJ, he moved his group to Philadelphia, calling them Waring's

Pennsylvanians. Tom and Fred Waring would perform their own vocals on recordings like "Collegiana," becoming one of the best-known orchestras on radio from 1933 onward. He started at CBS where



Fred Waring, 1938, while at NBC radio (Richard Grudens Collection)